



First Lt. Walter Snook from A Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, meets with military police escorts from the Estonian Defence Forces at the Latvia-Estonia border as part of the movement operation Able Falcon on June 3, 2015, during Atlantic Resolve. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Brooks Fletcher)

USAREUR Supports Soldiers Through ACSA Orders

U.S. Army Europe used acquisition and cross-servicing agreement orders during Atlantic Resolve to support forces throughout the region without having to move piles of tactical equipment or build lasting infrastructure.

■ By Lt. Col. Ned C. Holt

Army units based in the continental United States do not use acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) orders; however, when units train in a foreign country, these orders are a valuable and often overlooked means of support. U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) units participating in Atlantic Resolve used ACSA

orders in ways that had not been seen before and, in turn, learned valuable lessons that can be applied to different theaters.

According to Title 10 of the U.S. Code, ACSA orders are designed to allow the acquisition, sale, or exchange of logistics support, supplies, and services between the U.S. military and nations that have a defense

alliance with the United States. The orders give the military the flexibility to share common-user logistics among nations in order to minimize expenses and reduce the need for independent supply infrastructures.

Outside the United States, ACSA orders are one of the most responsive ways to obtain support for U.S. forces. However, knowledge of the rules

and procedures for ACSA orders is limited at the tactical level because these orders can be used only when dealing with a foreign military.

Atlantic Resolve Life Support

USAREUR leaned heavily on ACSA orders when it sent forces to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland in support of Atlantic Resolve in April 2014. An airborne infantry battalion task force from the 173rd Airborne Brigade deployed to the region in 72 hours.

This rapid movement was made possible, and was unique, because USAREUR used host-nation support to provide basic life support instead of building, bringing, or contracting its own. The decision to leverage host nations for most base life support functions allowed the unit to leave its organic and theater support assets at home station.

By design and doctrine, an infantry battalion receives logistics support from its forward support company and reinforcing support from its brigade support battalion. Infantry battalions are not normally spread out across 500 kilometers, four countries, and several international boundaries as they are during Atlantic Resolve. The three factors of distance, borders, and the stretching of support assets made consolidated field feeding, maintenance, life support, and associated logistics tasks difficult.

Using a host nation to provide almost all base life support is a bold move; there was no modern precedent for garrisoning U.S. forces in allied countries for extended periods of time without building bases and infrastructure. In post-World War II Germany and Japan and after the Korean War, the United States built bases and then fed, secured, and took care of its Soldiers.

Recent U.S. operational experiences in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan began with the United States establishing its own bases, living in tents or borrowed or occupied buildings, and then designing a temporary or permanent solution. At almost no

point during these diverse operations was a host nation called on to house or feed U.S. Soldiers for any measurable length of time on their own posts.

Using the ACSA order process for prolonged periods of time to house and sustain U.S. Soldiers is different from the norm. Soldiers in Atlantic Resolve even lived and dined in existing host-nation military barracks. This paid off because USAREUR was able to quickly and relatively inexpensively support multiple operations without deploying most of the unit's support assets. Maximizing host-nation support allowed USAREUR to use its strategic enabling units and equipment for other operations.

This is not to say that the experience was without problems. Because of the expedient nature of the Atlantic Resolve deployment, many U.S. Soldiers were housed in open bay barracks built for initial-entry training, in hastily converted offices, or in abandoned buildings. Limited personal space was not the only problem: the meals and meal cycles in the host-nation dining facilities were radically different from those in U.S. dining facilities.

Adjusting to these new norms took patience from both U.S. and host-nation forces. It also required carefully negotiated improvements and changes to ensure a reasonable equilibrium was achieved between a deployed environment and a steady-state operation.

A Managing Department

As the implementation of this new support plan went forward, the need for one department to manage the process became quite apparent. Negotiating support and establishing standard practices are beyond the purview of an infantry battalion (especially one spread out over four countries).

With most of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Italy and focused on other missions, the USAREUR staff was left to manage all host-nation sup-

port and ACSA orders for Atlantic Resolve. Both the USAREUR G-8 International Agreements section and the G-4 Plans, Operations, and Exercises Branch were extremely familiar with ACSA orders and had been using them to support 40 to 50 exercises throughout Europe each year.

However, they had never used ACSA orders long-term to provide all logistics support, supplies, and services to U.S. Soldiers in the USAREUR area of responsibility, and no specific department managed the process. After several months of supporting Atlantic Resolve ACSA orders through an ad hoc manner, the USAREUR G-4 directed the Multi-national and Interagency Branch of the G-4 Plans, Operations, and Exercises Branch to assume control of all host-nation support and ACSA orders for Atlantic Resolve.

Using a single department to handle all ACSA orders for Atlantic Resolve had multiple benefits for USAREUR, Atlantic Resolve rotational units, and the host nations, including flattening and streamlining all facets of host-nation support.

For the USAREUR G-3, G-4, and G-8, it facilitated the creation of more inclusive ACSA orders that supported multiple operations in the same country. It also provided the command with a one-stop shop to quickly implement changes, resolve conflicts, and act as an honest broker between Atlantic Resolve rotational units and the host nations.

U.S. units participating in Atlantic Resolve had one department to advocate on their behalf to improve base life support. With one department managing all host-nation support, USAREUR G-3 and G-4 planners could quickly spot trends or issues and synchronize efforts across the command.

The streamlined organization benefited the host nations because it limited the number of U.S. logistics planners, legal advisers, budget officers, and decisions-makers that they had to work with. Most important-

ly to the host nations, the payment timeline for ACSA orders dropped from more than four months to less than two weeks.

Statement of Requirements

An ACSA order form contains nothing but the information regarding the cost of trading or providing services. Although the language in an ACSA order is useful to budget and contracting officers, it provides very little information to a deployed company commander or first sergeant on how to operate in a forward environment for six months. To close the gap between what is on an ACSA order and the various challenges of a deployed environment, USAREUR units used a statement of requirements (SOR).

An SOR provides the flexibility to address issues that are not included in an ACSA order and is very similar to a memorandum of agreement. Like a memorandum of agreement, it has no defined format; therefore, it can be designed to fit almost any situation.

Although an SOR is not a legally binding document, units deployed in support of Atlantic Resolve found it extremely useful because it sets the ground rules for a variety of items and situations that are not usually contained in an ACSA order, such as the following:

- Procedures in the event of an accident, fire, or hazardous materials spill.
- A mechanism to resolve military-

to-military disputes with points of contact and 24-hour emergency services information.

- Procedures for casualty evacuation to a host-nation hospital.
- Storage and maintenance facility rights on host-nation bases.
- The use of host-nation logistics support assets (cranes and forklifts) and transportation services.
- Meal hours and protocols for requesting meals for training exercises.

It is easy to see the usefulness of an SOR, and its importance cannot be overstated. More than anything, a well-done SOR is a road map to cooperation between two nations' militaries. Because it clearly articulates the type of support to be rendered,



Personnel from the Latvian National Armed Forces, U.S. Army, and U.S. Air Force conduct joint airborne training operations at Lielvarde Air Base, Latvia, on June 15, 2015. Service members were deployed to Latvia and participated in the training as part of Saber Strike 2015 and subsequently Atlantic Resolve, an ongoing, multinational partnership focused on joint training and security cooperation between U.S. forces and NATO allies. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Brooks Fletcher)

the periods of performance, location, prices, and points of contact, a well-written SOR can sort out 95 percent of the issues a unit could possibly encounter.

ACSA Order Benefits

One of the primary benefits of an ACSA order over a contract is the timeliness of the solution. An ACSA order can be approved in three to five days, while contingency contracting can easily take 15 to 20 days. Contracts take longer because of mandatory bidding and approval timelines set out in the Federal Acquisition Regulations; ACSA orders are not subject to those regulations.

ACSA orders are governed by the terms of the country-to-country ACSA agreement. In order to ensure that the U.S. government gets a fair price and to eliminate potential fraud, the USAREUR ACSA order standard operating procedures require that all ACSA orders over a specified dollar threshold be routed through the 409th Contracting Support Brigade. The G-8 is the approving authority for all ACSA orders. Even with these steps, ACSA orders can be accomplished more quickly than a contract can.

Probably the least known benefit of using ACSA orders instead of contracting for life support and meals in the Baltic States is the cost. Contracting for support in a foreign nation can easily cost three times more than using the host nation to provide the same support through an ACSA order.

This is primarily due to the economy of scale. Using contractors and using the host-nation military for food service, for example, cost relatively the same, but the host-nation military already has an existing infrastructure to support the procurement, storage, production, and dissemination of meals. A contractor has to establish all of these systems and make a profit, while the host nation already has dining facility infrastructure in place.

ACSA rules prevent the parties

involved from making a profit. The rules also require the military that is selling a service or commodity to charge the United States the same price it charges for its own personnel. This means that if the Estonian army charges one of its own soldiers 2.98 euros for breakfast, it can charge a U.S. Soldier no more than 2.98 euros for the same breakfast.

Coordination

Although the Baltic States all have advanced economies, they are relatively small countries and their contracting base is limited in size and scope. Before there was a consolidated department handling host-nation support, the host nation and the U.S. Army were competing for the same heavy equipment transporter assets, chemical latrines, shower containers, and field-feeding services.

In effect, the U.S. and host-nation armed forces were bidding for identical services with the same companies. Having one entity responsible for coordinating all support gives the host nation the ability to lock in assets for future requirements without the fear of being outbid, and it ensures continuity of support.

Two components critical to the success of wide-ranging, long-term ACSA orders are constant communication and having multiple venues to address the inherent challenges associated with military forces sharing the same space and resources for extended periods of time. The USAREUR staff realized these were relatively small issues, such as the amount of protein in breakfast meals, how to bill for lost keys or broken windows, and the timeliness of payments.

At both the tactical and operational levels, regularly scheduled meetings, coordination elements, and other mechanisms were put in place. These mechanisms ensured each party understood the governing rules of host-nation support agreements and that communications were flattened.

During the Headquarters, Department of the Army, G-3/5/7 Baltic States Staff Talks held in Vilnius,

Lithuania, in July 2015, the nations in attendance broached the topic of establishing a common set of roles and responsibilities.

The USAREUR G-4 took the lead in conducting an international agreements and ACSA orders training and education program across all four nations to ensure a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities at every level. Well over 300 senior members of the Baltic States' civilian and military commands attended these training and information conferences, and the results provided direct benefits to all parties involved in Atlantic Resolve.

ACSA orders are powerful tools that can enhance the operational effectiveness of a commander, reduce expenses, and provide greater flexibility than bringing or contracting for supplies and equipment. However, they can be used only when dealing with the armed forces of a foreign nation, and the business rules of ACSA orders are not readily understood across the Army. If a unit is going to train with another nation, learning about the process before the planning begins can alleviate most concerns and reduce friction that may occur during the operation.

USAREUR's experience with ACSA orders during Atlantic Resolve was a positive example because it was able to quickly respond and deploy forces throughout the region without moving piles of tactical equipment or building permanent or lasting infrastructure. Using ACSA orders to house, feed, and secure U.S. forces could be the wave of the future when deploying forces to forward locations.

Lt. Col. Ned C. Holt is the commander of the 7th Group Support Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. He has bachelor's degrees in history and political science from Louisiana State University and a master's degree in diplomacy from Hawaii Pacific University.